

A Protestant Dictatorship Via The Constitution of the W.C.C [1]

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On various occasions the Church of Greece had been pushing for changes in the Constitution of the World Council of Churches in order to change the practice of its directors who were proposing those members "they" wanted to be appointed to committees and then asking the Orthodox Synods for approval.

An example of how the Orthodox were being dictated to by the Protestant majority rule built into its constitution can be seen by three crude examples at the General Assembly in Nairobi (1975). In three cases an individual Protestant made a motion from the floor to replace an Orthodox candidate for Central Committee (who had been proposed by his own Orthodox Church) to be replaced by another member of this Orthodox Church's delegation to be voted upon by the vast Protestant majority. They did this in three cases, 1) the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 2) the Church of Russia and 3) the Church of Greece.

The session turned out to be hectic indeed. Metropolitan Meliton, a member of the Holy Synod of Constantinople New Rome, chairing the general assembly shouted, "there are «gangsters» in the hall," not realizing that any member of the assembly had a constitutional right to do this.

Such problems finally led to a special meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria, during May 23-31, 1981 between the Orthodox Churches and the General Secretary of the WCC, the Rev. Philip Potter, assisted by some members of the staff and the permanent representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the WCC who presided.

After preliminaries the main discussion began with this writer reading the demands of the Church of Greece for changes in the Constitution. (see text pages 100-101 in THE SOFIA CONSULTATION, Orthodox Involvement in the WCC, edited by Todor Sabev, Geneva 1981[3]. Immediately after this reading the General Secretary reacted by explaining that the WCC could not function within such a context. However, all representatives of the Orthodox Churches present commented in turn and agreed with this statement of the Church of Greece. But

Rev. Potter was evidently prepared and reacted by proposing that since all the Orthodox Churches agree, one does not have to change the Constitution.«We will accept the names proposed by the Orthodox Churches themselves without making proposals.»

Albert Laham, a Geneva lawyer representing the Patriarchate of Antioch sitting opposite me, and I indicated to each other by sign language that we should go for the change in the Constitution. At the same time I turned to my Metropolitan representing the Church of Greece with me and said to him «Of course we will go for the change in the Constitution!» Instead of discussing the matter with me he immediately took the floor and announced in perfect English that «since a great man like Mr. Potter guarantees that our choices will be respected, why should we put everyone to the trouble of changing the Constitution?»

Up until that point I had been translating whatever he was saying into English. In other words he had memorized his little speech in English. We latter learned that he had made an application for a "grant" from the WCC.

The Synod of the Church of Greece had sent 'only' two names of specialists, one in Dogmatics and one in History of Dogma, for membership in Faith and Order in order not to allow the Protestants to choose anyone else. The Metropolitan in question (my partner at the Sofia Consultation) was chairman of the Synod's committee on external affairs which included the WCC and other dialogues. Just after Sofia he received a letter from Philip Potter asking whether it would be possible to add three more names to the two names proposed for Faith and Order by the Church of Greece. He showed me the letter and asked me for my opinion. "How can I have an opinion," I answered, "since I am one of the two proposed by the Standing Synod? The matter must be decided by the Synod which took the decision about the two proposed named, not by either me nor you!"

Notwithstanding, he added three more names for Faith and Order, as proposed by Philip Potter, by means of a deceit without the permission of the Standing Synod as follows: The chairmen of the Synodical Committees had the right to ask

the Secretary of the Standing Synod to add to the minutes of its last session a decision to answer letters which cannot wait for the next session of the Standing Synod. It is in this way that my Metropolitan colleague at Sofia circumvented the decision of the Standing Synod. So he answered Philip Potter's letter by adding three more names to the two names decided upon by the Standing Synod: one specialist in history of doctrine, one specialist in Church History and one specialist in Liturgics. The staff of the WCC chose the specialist in Liturgics for Standing Commission and the specialist in Church History for the Plenary Assembly. Evidently those responsible made their choices based on the usual Protestant and Catholic criteria between Conservatives and Liberals.

However, in the Old and New Testament tradition of the Prophets and of the Fathers of the Ecumenical Councils, there are no liberals and no conservatives, for the simple reason that religion itself is a neurological sickness of the heart whose only cure is the purification and the illumination of the heart by unceasing prayer (in contrast to prayer with the brain) which culminates in glorification (1 Cor. 12, 26) which is ordination to prophethood by the Lord of Glory Himself both before and after His incarnation and His Father's transformation of His faithful into His Body the Church on Pentecost.

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FOOTNOTES

[1]Chapter 14 of "Orthodox-Heterodox Dialogues And The World Council of Churches." full text at <http://www.romanity.org>.

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[3]ISBN No. 2-8254-0728-3 © 1982 World Council of Churches, 150 route de Ferney, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland.